John Chrysostom

(c. 347 – 14 September 407)

BRIEFING

John Chrysostom (/ˈkrɪsəstəm, krɪˈsɒstəm/; Greek: Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος, Latin: Ioannes Chrysostomus; c. 347 – 14 September 407) was an important Church Father who served as archbishop of Constantinople. He is known for his preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, his *Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, and his ascetic sensibilities. He was also the author of *Adversus Judaeos* and was strongly anti-Judaism. The epithet Χρυσόστομος (*Chrysostomos*, anglicized as Chrysostom) means "golden-mouthed" in Greek and denotes his celebrated eloquence. Chrysostom was among the most prolific authors in the early Christian Church.

He is honored as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches, as well as in some others. The Eastern Orthodox, together with the Byzantine Catholics, hold him in special regard as one of the Three Holy Hierarchs (alongside Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus). Along with them and Athanasius of Alexandria he is also regarded as one of the four Great Greek Church Fathers. The feast days of John Chrysostom in the Eastern Orthodox Church are 14 September, 13 November and 27 January. In the Catholic Church, he is recognised as a Doctor of the Church. Because the date of his death is occupied by the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September), the General Roman Calendar celebrates him since 1970 on the previous day, 13 September; from the 13th century to 1969 it did so on 27 January, the anniversary of the translation of his body to Constantinople. Of other Western churches, including Anglican provinces and Lutheran churches, some commemorate him on 13 September, others on 27 January. John Chrysostom is honored on the calendars of the Church of England and the Episcopal Church on 13 September. The Coptic Church also recognizes him as a saint (with feast days on 16 Thout and 17 Hathor).

BIOGRAPHY

Early life

John was born in Antioch, Roman Syria (modern-day Antakya, Hatay, Turkey) in 347. Different scholars describe his mother Anthusa as a pagan or as a Christian. His father was a high-ranking military officer. John's father died soon after his birth and he was raised by his mother. He was baptised in 368 or 373, and tonsured as a reader (one of the minor orders of the Church). It is sometimes said that he was bitten by a snake when he was ten years old, resulting in infection from the bite.

As a result of his mother's influential connections in the city, John began his education under the rhetorician Libanius. From Libanius, John acquired the skills for a career in rhetoric, as well as a love of the Greek language and literature. Eventually, he became a lawyer.

As he grew older, however, John became more deeply committed to Christianity and went on to study theology under Diodorus of Tarsus, founder of the re-constituted School of Antioch. According to the Christian historian Sozomen, Libanius was supposed to have said on his deathbed that John would have been his successor "if the Christians had not taken him from us".

John lived in extreme asceticism and became a hermit in about 375; he spent the next two years continually standing, scarcely sleeping, and committing the Bible to memory. As a consequence of these practices, his stomach and kidneys were permanently damaged and poor health forced him to return to Antioch.

Diaconate and service in Antioch

John was first appointed as a reader in the church of Antioch by Zeno of Verona upon the latter's return from Jerusalem. Later, he was ordained as a deacon in 381 by the bishop Meletius of Antioch who was not then in communion with Alexandria and Rome. After the death of Meletius, John separated himself from the followers of Meletius, without joining Paulinus II of Antioch, the rival of Meletius for the bishopric of Antioch. But after the death of Paulinus II (388) he was ordained a presbyter (priest) by Evagrius of Antioch, the successor of Paulinus by the Eustathius of Antioch faction in the city. He was destined later to bring about reconciliation between Flavian I of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, thus bringing those three sees into communion for the first time in nearly seventy years.

In Antioch, over the course of twelve years (386–397), John gained popularity because of the eloquence of his public speaking at the Golden Church, Antioch's cathedral, especially his insightful expositions of Bible passages and moral teaching. The most valuable of his works from this period are his homilies on various books of the Bible. He emphasised charitable giving and was concerned with the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. He spoke against abuse of wealth and personal property:

> *Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: "This is my body" is the same who said: "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food", and "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me"... What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.*

His straightforward understanding of the Scriptures – in contrast to the Alexandrian tendency towards allegorical interpretation – meant that the themes of his talks were practical, explaining the Bible's application to everyday life. Such straightforward preaching helped Chrysostom to garner popular support.

One incident that happened during his service in Antioch illustrates the influence of his homilies. When Chrysostom arrived in Antioch, Flavian, the bishop of the city, had to intervene with emperor Theodosius I on behalf of citizens who had gone on a rampage mutilating statues of the emperor and his family. During the weeks of Lent in 387, John preached more than twenty homilies in which he entreated the people to see the error of their ways. These made a lasting impression on the general population of the city: many pagans converted to Christianity as a result of the homilies. The city was ultimately spared from severe consequences.

Archbishop of Constantinople

In the autumn of 397, John was appointed archbishop of Constantinople, after having been nominated without his knowledge by the eunuch Eutropius. He had to leave Antioch in secret due to fears that the departure of such a popular figure would cause civil unrest.

During his time as archbishop, he adamantly refused to host lavish social gatherings, which made him popular with the common people, but unpopular with wealthy citizens and the clergy. His reforms of the clergy were also unpopular. He told visiting regional preachers to return to the churches they were meant to be serving – without any pay-out. He also founded a number of hospitals in Constantinople.

His time in Constantinople was more tumultuous than his time in Antioch. Theophilus I of Alexandria, the patriarch of Alexandria, wanted to bring Constantinople under his sway and opposed John's appointment to Constantinople. Theophilus had disciplined four Egyptian monks (known as "the Tall Brothers") over their support of Origen's teachings. They fled to John and were welcomed by him. Theophilus therefore accused John of being too partial to the teaching of Origen. He made another enemy in Aelia Eudoxia, wife of emperor Arcadius, who assumed that John's denunciations of extravagance in feminine dress were aimed at her. Eudoxia, Theophilus and other of his enemies held a synod in 403 (the Synod of the Oak) to charge John, in which his connection to Origen was used against him. It resulted in his deposition and banishment. He was called back by Arcadius almost immediately, as the people became "tumultuous" over his departure, even threatening to burn the imperial palace. There was an earthquake the night of his arrest, which Eudoxia took for a sign of God's anger, prompting her to ask Arcadius for John's reinstatement.

Peace was short-lived. A silver statue of Eudoxia was erected in the Augustaion, near his cathedral, the Constantinian Hagia Sophia. John denounced the dedication ceremonies as pagan and spoke against the empress in harsh terms: "Again Herodias raves, again she dances, and again desires to receive John's head on a charger", an allusion to the Biblical events surrounding the death of John the Baptist. Once again he was banished, this time to the Caucasus in Abkhazia. His banishment sparked riots among his supporters in the capital, and in the fighting the cathedral built by Constantius II was burnt down, necessitating the construction of the second cathedral on the site, the Theodosian Hagia Sophia.

Around 405, John began to lend moral and financial support to Christian monks who were enforcing the emperors' anti-pagan laws, by destroying temples and shrines in Phoenicia and nearby regions.

ORIGENIST CRISES

The **Origenist crises** or **Origenist controversies** were two major theological controversies in early Christianity involving the teachings of followers of the third-century Alexandrian theologian Origen (c. 184 – c. 253).

The First Origenist Crisis began in the late fourth century in Palestine and later spread to Egypt. It dealt with ideas discussed in some of Origen's writings that some members of the church hierarchy deemed heretical. Objections against Origen's writings and demands for his condemnation were first raised by Epiphanius of Salamis and later taken up by Jerome and Theophilus of Alexandria, who were both initially supporters of Origen's teachings. Origen's defenders included Tyrannius Rufinus and John II, Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the crisis, Theophilus condemned Origen's incorporeal, non-anthropomorphic conception of God, a view which Theophilus himself had previously vocally supported. The crisis concluded with John Chrysostom, the Patriarch of Constantinople, being removed from his position at the Synod of the Oak in 403 for harboring Origenist monks who had been banished from Alexandria.

The Second Origenist Crisis occurred in the 6th century during the reign of Justinian I. It is less well-documented than the first crisis and dealt more with the ideas of groups influenced by Origen rather than with Origen's actual writings. It concluded with the Second Council of Constantinople possibly issuing an anathema against Origen in 553, although scholars dispute whether the Council actually issued the anathema condemning Origen or if it was added later.

First Origenist Crisis

The first Origenist crisis began in the late fourth century, coinciding with the beginning of monasticism in Palestine. The first stirring of the controversy came from the Cyprian bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, who was determined to root out all heresies and refute them. Epiphanius attacked Origen in his anti-heretical treatises *Ancoratus* (375) and *Panarion* (376), compiling a list of teachings Origen had espoused that Epiphanius regarded as heretical. Epiphanius's treatises portray Origen as an originally orthodox Christian who had been corrupted and turned into a heretic by the evils of "Greek education". Epiphanius particularly objected to Origen's Subordinationism, his "excessive" use of allegorical hermeneutic, and his habit of proposing ideas about the Bible "speculatively, as exercises" rather than "dogmatically".

Epiphanius asked John II, Bishop of Jerusalem to condemn Origen as a heretic. John refused because a person could not be retroactively condemned as a heretic after death. In 393, a monk named Atarbius advanced a petition to have Origen and his writings to be censured. Tyrannius Rufinus, a priest at the monastery on the Mount of Olives who had been ordained by John of Jerusalem and was a longtime admirer of Origen, rejected the petition outright. Rufinus's close friend and associate Jerome, who had also studied Origen, however, came to agree with the petition. Around the same time, John Cassian introduced Origen's teachings to the West.

In 394, Epiphanius wrote to John of Jerusalem, again asking for Origen to be condemned, insisting that Origen's writings denigrated human sexual reproduction and accused him of being an Encratite. John once again denied this request. By 395, Jerome had allied himself with the anti-Origenists and begged John of Jerusalem to condemn Origen, a plea which John once again refused. Epiphanius launched a campaign against John, openly preaching that John was an Origenist deviant. He successfully persuaded Jerome to break communion with John and ordained Jerome's brother Paulinianus as a priest in defiance of John's authority.

Meanwhile, in 397, Rufinus published a Latin translation of Origen's *On First Principles*. Rufinus was convinced that heretics had interpolated Origen's original treatise and that these interpolations were the source of the heterodox teachings found in it. He therefore heavily modified Origen's text, omitting and altering any parts that disagreed with contemporary Christian orthodoxy. In the introduction to this translation, Rufinus mentioned that Jerome had studied under Origen's disciple Didymus the Blind, implying that Jerome was a follower of Origen. Jerome was so incensed by this that he resolved to produce his Latin translation of *On the First Principles*, in which he promised to translate every word exactly as it was written and lay bare Origen's heresies to the whole world. Jerome's translation has been lost in its entirety.

In 399, the Origenist crisis reached Egypt. Theophilus of Alexandria was sympathetic to the supporters of Origen and the church historian, Sozomen, records that he had openly preached the Origenist teaching that God was incorporeal. In his *Festal Letter* of 399, he denounced those who believed that God had a literal, human-like body, calling them illiterate "simple ones". A large mob of Alexandrian monks who regarded God as anthropomorphic rioted in the streets. According to the church historian Socrates Scholasticus, in order to prevent a riot, Theophilus made a sudden about-face and began denouncing Origen. In the year 400, Theophilus summoned a council in Alexandria, which condemned Origen and all his followers as heretics for having taught that God was incorporeal, which they decreed contradicted the only true and orthodox position, which was that God had a literal, physical body resembling that of a human.

Theophilus labelled Origen himself as the "hydra of all heresies" and persuaded Pope Anastasius I to sign the letter of the council, which primarily denounced the teachings of the Nitrian monks associated with Evagrius Ponticus. In 402, Theophilus expelled Origenist monks from Egyptian monasteries (including Isaac of the Cells) and banished the four monks known as the "Tall Brothers", who were leaders of the Nitrian community. John Chrysostom, the Patriarch of Constantinople, granted the Tall Brothers asylum, a fact which Theophilus used to orchestrate John's condemnation and removal from his position at the Synod of the Oak in July of 403. Once John Chrysostom had been deposed, Theophilus restored normal relations with the Origenist monks in Egypt and the first Origenist crisis came to an end.

Second Origenist Crisis

The Second Origenist Crisis occurred in the sixth century, during the height of Byzantine monasticism. Although the Second Origenist Crisis is not nearly as well documented as the first, it seems to have primarily concerned the teachings of Origen's later followers, rather than anything Origen himself had actually written. Origen's disciple Evagrius Ponticus had advocated contemplative prayer, but other monastic communities prioritized asceticism in prayer, emphasizing fasting, labors, and vigils. Some Origenist monks in Palestine, referred to by their enemies as "Isochristoi" (meaning "those who would assume equality with Christ"), emphasized Origen's teaching of the pre-existence of souls and held that all souls were originally equal to Christ's and would become equal again at the end of time. Another faction of Origenists in the same region instead insisted that Christ was the "leader of many brethren", as the first-created being. This faction was more moderate and they were referred to by their opponents as "Protoktistoi" ("First Createds"). Both factions accused the other of heresy and other Christians accused both of them of heresy.

The Protoktistoi appealed to the Emperor Justinian I to condemn the Isochristoi of heresy through Pelagius, the papal *apocrisarius*. In 543 AD, Pelagius presented Justinian with documents, including a letter denouncing Origen written by Patriarch Mennas of Constantinople, along with excerpts from Origen's *On First Principles* and several anathemata against Origen. A domestic synod convened to address the issue concluded that the Isochristoi's teachings were heretical and, seeing Origen as the ultimate culprit behind the heresy, denounced Origen himself as a heretic as well. Emperor Justinian ordered for all of Origen's writings to be burned. In the west, the *Decretum Gelasianum*, which was written sometime between 519 and 553, listed Origen as an author whose writings were to be categorically banned.

In 553, during the early days of the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical Council), when Pope Vigilius was still refusing to take part in it, despite Justinian holding him hostage, the bishops at the council ratified an open letter which condemned Origen as the leader of the Isochristoi. The letter was not part of the official acts of the council and it more or less repeated the edict issued by the Synod of Constantinople in 543. It cites objectionable writings attributed to Origen, but all the writings referred to in it were actually written by Evagrius Ponticus. After the council officially opened, but while Pope Vigillius was still refusing to take part, Justinian presented the bishops with the problem of a text known as *The Three Chapters*, which attacked the Antiochene Christology.

The bishops drew up a list of anathemata against the heretical teachings contained within *The Three Chapters* and those associated with them. In the official text of the eleventh anathema, Origen is condemned as a Christological heretic, but Origen's name does not appear at all in the *Homonoia*, the first draft of the anathemata issued by the imperial chancery, nor does it appear in the version of the conciliar proceedings that was eventually signed by Pope Vigillius, a long time afterwards. These discrepancies may indicate that Origen's name may have been retrospectively inserted into the text after the Council. Some authorities believe these anathemata belong to an earlier local synod. Even if Origen's name did appear in the original text of the anathema, the teachings attributed to Origen that are condemned in the anathema were actually the ideas of later Origenists, which had very little grounding in anything Origen himself had actually written. In fact, Popes Vigilius (537–555), Pelagius I (556–561), Pelagius II (579–590), and Gregory the Great (590–604) were only aware that the Fifth Council specifically dealt with *The Three Chapters* and make no mention of Origenism or Universalism, nor spoke as if they knew of its condemnation—even though Gregory the Great was opposed to Universalism.

EXILE AND DEATH

The causes of John's exile are not clear, though Jennifer Barry suggests that they have to do with his connections to Arianism. Other historians, including Wendy Mayer and Geoffrey Dunn, have argued that "the surplus of evidence reveals a struggle between Johannite and anti-Johannite camps in Constantinople soon after John's departure and for a few years after his death". Faced with exile, John Chrysostom wrote an appeal for help to three churchmen: Pope Innocent I; Venerius, the bishop of Mediolanum (Milan); and Chromatius, the bishop of Aquileia. In 1872, church historian William Stephens wrote:

> *The Patriarch of the Eastern Rome appeals to the great bishops of the West, as the champions of an ecclesiastical discipline which he confesses himself unable to enforce or to see any prospect of establishing. No jealousy is entertained of the Patriarch of the Old Rome by the patriarch of the New Rome. The interference of Innocent is courted, a certain primacy is accorded him, but at the same time he is not addressed as a supreme arbitrator; assistance and sympathy are solicited from him as from an elder brother, and two other prelates of Italy are joint recipients with him of the appeal.*

Pope Innocent I protested John's banishment from Constantinople to the town of Cucusus (Göksun) in Cappadocia, but to no avail. Innocent sent a delegation to intercede on behalf of John in 405. It was led by Gaudentius of Brescia; Gaudentius and his companions, two bishops, encountered many difficulties and never reached their goal of entering Constantinople.

John wrote letters which still held great influence in Constantinople. As a result of this, he was further exiled from Cucusus (where he stayed from 404 to 407) to Pitiunt (Pityus) (in modern Georgia). He never reached this destination alive, as he died at Comana Pontica (modern-day Gümenek, Tokat, Turkey) on 14 September 407 during the journey. He died in the Presbyterium or community of the clergy belonging to the church of Saint Basiliscus of Comana. His last words are said to have been "Δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν" ("Glory be to God for all things").

Veneration and canonisation

John came to be venerated as a saint soon after his death. Almost immediately after, an anonymous supporter of John (known as pseudo-Martyrius) wrote a funeral oration to reclaim John as a symbol of Christian orthodoxy. But three decades later, some of his adherents in Constantinople remained in schism. Proclus, archbishop of Constantinople (434–446), hoping to bring about the reconciliation of the Johannites, preached a homily praising his predecessor in the Church of Hagia Sophia. He said, "O John, your life was filled with sorrow, but your death was glorious. Your grave is blessed and reward is great, by the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ O graced one, having conquered the bounds of time and place! Love has conquered space, unforgetting memory has annihilated the limits, and place does not hinder the miracles of the saint."

These homilies helped to mobilize public opinion, and the patriarch received permission from the emperor to return Chrysostom's relics to Constantinople, where they were enshrined in the Church of the Holy Apostles on 28 January 438. The Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates him as a "Great Ecumenical Teacher", with Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. These three saints, in addition to having their own individual commemorations throughout the year, are commemorated together on 30 January, a feast known as the Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, there are several feast days dedicated to him:

- 27 January, Translation of the relics of Saint John Chrysostom from Comana to Constantinople.
- 30 January, Synaxis of the Three Great Hierarchs.
- 14 September, Repose of Saint John Chrysostom.
- 13 November, celebration was transferred from 14 September by the 10th century AD as the Exaltation of the Holy Cross became more prominent. According to Brian Croke, 13 November is the date news of John Chrysostom's death reached Constantinople.

In 1908 Pope Pius X named him the patron saint of preachers.

WRITINGS

Some 700 sermons and 246 letters by John Chrysostom survive, plus biblical commentaries, moral discourses, and theological treatises.

Homilies

The best known of his many homilies is an extremely brief one, the Paschal Homily (*Hieratikon*), which is read at the first service of Pascha (Easter), the midnight Orthros (Matins), in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Chrysostom's extant homiletical works are vast, including many hundreds of exegetical homilies on both the New Testament (especially the works of Paul the Apostle) and the Old Testament (particularly on Genesis). Among his exegetical works are sixty-seven homilies on Genesis, fifty-nine on the Psalms, ninety on the Gospel of Matthew, eighty-eight on the Gospel of John, and fifty-five on the Acts of the Apostles.

The homilies were written down by stenographers and subsequently circulated, revealing a style that tended to be direct and greatly personal, but formed by the rhetorical conventions of his time and place. In general, his homiletical theology displays much characteristics of the Antiochian school (i.e., more literal in interpreting biblical events), but he also uses a good deal of the allegorical interpretation more associated with the Alexandrian school.

John's social and religious world was formed by the continuing and pervasive presence of paganism in the life of the city. One of his regular topics was the paganism in the culture of Constantinople, and in his homilies, he thunders against popular pagan amusements: the theatre, horseraces, and the revelry surrounding holidays. In particular, he criticizes Christians for taking part in such activities:

> *If you ask [Christians] who is Amos or Obadiah, how many apostles there were or prophets, they stand mute; but if you ask them about the horses or drivers, they answer with more solemnity than sophists or rhetors.*

One of the recurring features of John's homilies is his emphasis on care for the needy. Echoing themes found in the Gospel of Matthew, he calls upon the rich to lay aside materialism in favor of helping the poor, often employing all of his rhetorical skills to shame wealthy people to abandon conspicuous consumption:

> *Do you pay such honor to your excrements as to receive them into a silver chamber-pot when another man made in the image of God is perishing in the cold?*

Along these lines, he wrote often about the need for almsgiving and its importance alongside fasting and prayer, e.g. "prayer without almsgiving is unfruitful".

Cyril of Alexandria attributed the destruction of the Ephesian Temple of Artemis to John Chrysostom, referring to him as "the destroyer of the demons and overthrower of the temple of Diana". A later Archbishop of Constantinople, Proclus of Constantinople repeated the allegation, saying "In Ephesus, he despoiled the art of Midas". Both claims are considered spurious.

During his first two years as a presbyter in Antioch (386–387), John denounced Jews and Christians in a series of eight homilies delivered to Christians in his congregation who were taking part in Jewish festivals and other Jewish observances. It is disputed whether the main targets were specifically the so called "Judaizers" or Jews in general. His homilies were expressed in the conventional manner, using the uncompromising rhetorical form known as the *psogos* (Greek: blame, censure).

One of the purposes of these homilies was to prevent Christians from participating in Jewish customs, and thus prevent the perceived erosion of Chrysostom's flock. In his homilies, John criticized those "Judaizing Christians", who were participating in Jewish festivals and taking part in other Jewish observances, such as the shabbat, submitted to circumcision and made pilgrimage to Jewish holy places. There had been a revival of Jewish faith and tolerance in Antioch in 361, so Chrysostom's followers and the greater Christian community were in contact with Jews frequently, and Chrysostom was concerned that this interaction would draw Christians away from their faith identity.

John claimed that synagogues were full of Christians, especially Christian women, on the shabbats and Jewish festivals, because they loved the solemnity of the Jewish liturgy and enjoyed listening to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and applauded famous preachers in accordance with the contemporary custom. Due to Chrysostom's stature in the Christian church, both locally and within the greater church hierarchy, his sermons were fairly successful in spreading anti-Jewish sentiment.

In Greek, the homilies are called *Kata Ioudaiōn* (Κατὰ Ἰουδαίων), which is translated as *Adversus Judaeos* in Latin and "Against the Jews" in English. The original Benedictine editor of the homilies, Bernard de Montfaucon, gives the following footnote to the title: "A discourse against the Jews; but it was delivered against those who were Judaizing and keeping the fasts with them [the Jews]".

According to Patristics scholars, opposition to any particular view during the late 4th century was conventionally expressed in a manner, using the rhetorical form known as the psogos, whose literary conventions were to vilify opponents in an uncompromising manner; thus, it has been argued that to call Chrysostom an "anti-Semite" is to employ anachronistic terminology in a way incongruous with historical context and record. This does not preclude assertions that Chrysostom's theology was a form of anti-Jewish supersessionism.

His sermons against Jews gave further momentum to the idea that Jews are collectively responsible for the death of Jesus.

ADVERSUS JUDAEOS

Adversus Judaeos (Ancient Greek: Κατὰ Ἰουδαίων *Kata Ioudaiōn*, "against the Jews") are a series of fourth century homilies by Saint John Chrysostom directed to members of the church of Antioch of his time, who continued to observe Jewish feasts and fasts. Critical of this, he cast Judaism and the synagogues in his city in a critical and negative light.

There are modern scholars who claim that an abuse of his preaching fed later Christian antisemitism, and some, such as Stephen Katz, go even further, saying it was an inspiration for pagan Nazi antisemitism. Indeed, during World War II, the Nazi Party in Germany abused his homilies, quoting and reprinting them frequently in an attempt to legitimize the Holocaust in the eyes of German and Austrian Christians. Anglican priest James Parkes called the writing on Jews "the most horrible and violent denunciations of Judaism to be found in the writings of a Christian theologian". According to historian William I. Brustein, his sermons against Jews gave further momentum to the idea that the Jews are collectively responsible for the death of Jesus.

Purpose and context

During his first two years as a presbyter in Antioch (386-387), Chrysostom denounced Jews and Judaizing Christians in a series of eight sermons delivered to Christians in the church of Antioch, who were taking part in Jewish festivals and other Jewish observances. It is disputed whether the main target were specifically Judaizers or Jews in general. His homilies were expressed in the conventional manner, utilizing the uncompromising rhetorical form known as the *psogos* (Greek: blame).

One of the purposes of these homilies was to prevent Christians from participating in Jewish customs, and thus prevent the perceived erosion of Chrysostom's flock. In his sermons, Chrysostom criticized those "Judaizing Christians", who were participating in Jewish festivals and taking part in other Jewish observances, such as observing the sabbath, submitting to circumcision and pilgrimage to Jewish holy places.

In Greek, the sermons are called *Kata Ioudaiōn* (Κατὰ Ἰουδαίων), which is translated as *Adversus Judaeos* in Latin and *Against the Jews* in English. The most recent scholarly translations, claiming that Chrysostom's primary targets were members of his own congregation who continued to observe the Jewish feasts and fasts, give the sermons the more sympathetic title *Against Judaizing Christians*.

Antisemitism

Chrysostom claimed that on the shabbats and Jewish festivals synagogues were full of Christians, especially women, who loved the solemnity of the Jewish liturgy, enjoyed listening to the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and applauded famous preachers in accordance with the contemporary custom. A more recent apologetic theory is that he instead tried to persuade Jewish Christians, who for centuries had kept connections with Jews and Judaism, to choose between Judaism and Christianity.

Chrysostom held Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and deicide (killing God, see "Jewish deicide" for the subject). He compared the synagogue to a pagan temple, representing it as the source of all vices and heresies. He described it as a place worse than a brothel and a drinking shop; it was a den of scoundrels, the repair of wild beasts, a temple of demons, the refuge of brigands and debauchees, and the cavern of devils, a criminal assembly of the assassins of Christ. Palladius, Chrysostom's contemporary biographer, also recorded his claim that among the Jews the priesthood may be purchased and sold for money. Finally, he declared that, in accordance with the sentiments of the saints, he hated both the synagogue and the Jews, saying that *demons dwell in the synagogue* and *also in the souls of the Jews*, and describing them as growing *fit for slaughter.*

Since there were only two other ordained individuals in Antioch who were legally recognized as able to preach Christianity, Chrysostom was able to reach most of the local Christians, especially with his skills in the art of orating. He held great social and political power in Antioch, and frequently spoke about acts of violence taking place in Jewish areas to dissuade Christians from going there.

Historical recuperation

The original Benedictine editor of the homilies, Bernard de Montfaucon, gives the following footnote to the title: "A discourse against the Jews; but it was delivered against those who were Judaizing and keeping the fasts with them [the Jews]." As such, some have claimed that the original title misrepresents the contents of the discourses, which show that Chrysostom's primary targets were members of his own congregation who continued to observe the Jewish feasts and fasts. Sir Henry Savile, in his 1612 edition of *Homilies* 27 of Volume 6 (which is *Discourse I* in Patrologia Graeca's *Adversus Iudaeos*), gives the title: "Chrysostom's Discourse Against Those Who Are Judaizing and Observing Their Fasts."

British historian Paul Johnson stated that Chrysostom's homilies "became the pattern for anti-Jewish tirades, making the fullest possible use (and misuse) of key passages in the gospels of Saints Matthew and John. Thus a specifically Christian antisemitism, presenting the Jews as murderers of Christ, was grafted on to the seething mass of pagan smears and rumours, and Jewish communities were now at risk in every Christian city."

According to Patristics scholars, opposition to any particular view during the late fourth century was conventionally expressed in a manner, utilizing the rhetorical form known as the *psogos*, whose literary conventions were to vilify opponents in an uncompromising manner; thus, it has been argued that to call Chrysostom an "anti-Semite" is to employ anachronistic terminology in a way incongruous with historical context and record.

Chrysostom's homilies and Nazism

Some authors say John Chrysostom's preaching was an inspiration for Nazi antisemitism with its evil fruit of the programme to annihilate the Jewish race. Steven Katz cites Chrysostom's homilies as "the decisive turn in the history of Christian anti-Judaism, a turn whose ultimate disfiguring consequence was enacted in the political antisemitism of Adolf Hitler." During World War II, the Nazi Party in Germany used Chrysostom's work in an attempt to legitimize the Holocaust in the eyes of German and Austrian Christians. His works were frequently quoted and reprinted as a witness for the prosecution. After World War II, the Christian Churches denounced Nazi use of Chrysostom's works, explaining his words with reference to the historical context. According to Walter Laqueur, it was argued that in the 4th century, the general discourse was brutal and aggressive and that at the time when the Christian church was fighting for survival and recognition, mercy and forgiveness were not in demand.

Other Adverseus Iudaeos literature

Other documents also form part of the Adversus Iudaeos literature. These include Tertullian or Pseudo-Tertullian's own *Adversus Iudaeos*, Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa's *Testimonies Against The Jews*, the *Adversus Iudaeos* texts in the literature of medieval Russia. Schreckenberg sees in the popular antisemitic references, such as anti-usurer poetry by the Rhineland poet Muskatblut an extension of Adversus Iudaeos texts. Even Eusebius' Demonstratio against paganism.

Samuel Krauss, Jean Juster and later Marcel Simon argued that the Adversus Iudaeos literature is a form of continuation of earlier Jewish-Christian encounters, specifically until the reign of Julian in 361, though other writers see the documents as more about strengthening Christian self-identity.

HOMILY AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY

John Chrysostom's most notable discourse in this regard is his fourth homily on Romans 1:26, where he argues as follows:

> *All these affections then were vile, but chiefly the mad lust after males; for the soul is more the sufferer in sins, and more dishonored, than the body in diseases. ... [The men] have done an insult to nature itself. And a yet more disgraceful thing than these is it, when even the women seek after these intercourses, who ought to have more sense of shame than men.*

He says the active male victimizes the passive male in a way that leaves him more enduringly dishonored than even a victim of murder since the victim of this act must "live under" the shame of the "insolency". The victim of a murder, by contrast, carries no dishonor. He asserts that punishment will be found in Hell for such transgressors and that women can be guilty of the sin as much as men. Chrysostom argues that the male passive partner has effectively renounced his manhood and become a woman – such an individual deserves to be "driven out and stoned". He attributes the cause to "luxury". "Do not, he means (Paul), because you have heard that they burned, suppose that the evil was only in desire. For the greater part of it came of their luxuriousness, which also kindled into flame their lust".

According to scholar Michael Carden, Chrysostom was particularly influential in shaping early Christian thought that same-sex desire was an evil, claiming that he altered a traditional interpretation of Sodom as a place of inhospitality to one where the sexual transgressions of the Sodomites became paramount. However, other scholars – such as Kruger and Nortjé-Meyer – dispute this, arguing that the author of the Epistle of Jude already interpreted the sin of Sodom as homosexuality in the New Testament.

TREATISES

Apart from his homilies, a number of John's other treatises have had a lasting influence. One such work is John's early treatise *Against Those Who Oppose the Monastic Life*, written while he was a deacon (sometime before 386), which was directed to parents, pagan as well as Christian, whose sons were contemplating a monastic vocation. Chrysostom wrote that, already in his day, it was customary for Antiochenes to send their sons to be educated by monks.

Another important treatise written by John is titled *On the Priesthood* (written 390–391, it contains in Book 1 an account of his early years and a defence of his flight from ordination by bishop Meletius of Antioch, and then proceeds in later books to expound on his exalted understanding of the priesthood). Two other notable books by John are *Instructions to Catechumens* and *On the Incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature*. In addition, he wrote a series of letters to the deaconess Olympias, of which seventeen are extant.

LITURGY

Beyond his preaching, the other lasting legacy of John is his influence on Christian liturgy. Two of his writings are particularly notable. He harmonized the liturgical life of the church by revising the prayers and rubrics of the Divine Liturgy, or celebration of the Holy Eucharist. To this day, Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine Rite typically celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom as the normal Eucharistic liturgy, although his exact connection with it remains a matter of debate among experts.

LEGACY AND INFLUENCE

During a time when city clergy were subject to criticism for their high lifestyle, John was determined to reform his clergy in Constantinople. These efforts were met with resistance and limited success. He was seen as an excellent preacher whose homilies and writings are still studied and quoted. As a theologian, he has been and continues to be very important in Eastern Christianity, and is generally considered among the Three Holy Hierarchs of the Greek Church, but has been less important to Western Christianity. His writings have survived to the present day more so than any of the other Greek Fathers.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church cites him in eighteen sections, particularly his reflections on the purpose of prayer and the meaning of the Lord's Prayer:

Consider how [Jesus Christ] teaches us to be humble, by making us see that our virtue does not depend on our work alone but on grace from on high. He commands each of the faithful who prays to do so universally, for the whole world. For he did not say "thy will be done in me or in us", but "on earth", the whole earth, so that error may be banished from it, truth take root in it, all vice be destroyed on it, virtue flourish on it, and earth no longer differ from heaven.

Protestant clergy

Protestant clerics, such as Richard Salter Storrs, refer to him as "one of the most eloquent preachers who ever since apostolic times have brought to men the divine tidings of truth and love", and the 19th-century John Henry Newman described John as a "bright, cheerful, gentle soul; a sensitive heart".

Music and literature

John's liturgical legacy has inspired several musical compositions, including Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Op. 31, composed in 1910, one of his two major unaccompanied choral works; Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Op. 41; and Ukrainian composer Kyrylo Stetsenko's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Arvo Pärt's *Litany* sets Chrysostom's twenty-four prayers, one for each hour of the day, for soli, mixed choir and orchestra. And the compositions of Alexander Grechaninovs *Liturgy of Johannes Chrysostomos* No. 1, Op. 13 (1897), *Liturgy of Johannes Chrysostomos*, No. 2, Op. 29 (1902), *Liturgia Domestica (Liturgy Johannes Chrysostomos* No. 3), Op. 79 (1917) and *Liturgy of Johannes Chrysostomos* No. 4, Op. 177 (1943) are noteworthy.

James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* includes a character named Mulligan who brings "Chrysostomos" into another character (Stephen Dedalus)'s mind because Mulligan's gold-stopped teeth and his gift of the gab earn him the title which St. John Chrysostom's preaching earned him, "golden-mouthed": "[Mulligan] peered sideways up and gave a long low whistle of call, then paused awhile in rapt attention, his even white teeth glistening here and there with gold points. Chrysostomos".

Legend of the penance of Saint John Chrysostom

A late medieval legend relates that, when John Chrysostom was a hermit in the desert, he was approached by a royal princess in distress. John, thinking she was a demon, at first refused to help her, but the princess convinced him that she was a Christian and would be devoured by wild beasts if she were not allowed to enter his cave. He therefore admitted her, carefully dividing the cave in two parts, one for each of them. In spite of these precautions, the sin of fornication was committed, and in an attempt to hide it the distraught John took the princess and threw her over a precipice. He then went to Rome to beg absolution, which was refused. Realising the appalling nature of his crimes, Chrysostom made a vow that he would never rise from the ground until his sins were expiated, and for years he lived like a beast, crawling on all fours and feeding on wild grasses and roots. Subsequently, the princess reappeared, alive, and suckling John's baby, who miraculously pronounced his sins forgiven. This last scene was very popular from the late 15th century onwards as a subject for engravers and artists. The theme was depicted by Albrecht Dürer around 1496, Hans Sebald Beham and Lucas Cranach the Elder, among others. Martin Luther mocked this same legend in his *Die Lügend von S. Johanne Chrysostomo* (1537) to analyse the pitfalls of the Christian Legendary (hagiography).

Relics

John Chrysostom died in the city of Comana in 407 on his way to his place of exile. There his relics remained until 438 when, thirty years after his death, they were transferred to Constantinople during the reign of the empress Aelia Eudoxia's son, the emperor Theodosius II (408–450), under the guidance of John's disciple, Proclus of Constantinople, who by that time had become archbishop of Constantinople (434–447).

Most of John's relics were looted from Constantinople by crusaders in 1204 and taken to Rome, but some of his bones were returned to the Orthodox Church on 27 November 2004 by Pope John Paul II. Since 2004 the relics have been enshrined in the Church of St. George, Istanbul.

The skull, however, having been kept at the monastery at Vatopedi on Mount Athos in northern Greece, was not among the relics that were taken by the crusaders in the 13th century. In 1655, at the request of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, the skull was taken to Russia, for which the monastery was compensated in the sum of 2,000 rubles. In 1693, having received a request from the Vatopedi Monastery for the return of Saint John's skull, Tsar Peter the Great ordered that the skull remain in Russia but that the monastery was to be paid 500 rubles every four years. The Russian state archives document these payments up until 1735. The skull was kept at the Moscow Kremlin, in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God, until 1920, when it was confiscated by the Soviets and placed in the Museum of Silver Antiquities. In 1988, in connection with the 1,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia, the head, along with other important relics, was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church and kept at the Epiphany Cathedral, until being moved to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour after its restoration.

Today, the monastery at Vatopedi posits a rival claim to possessing the skull of John Chrysostom, and there a skull is venerated by pilgrims to the monastery as that of Saint John. Two sites in Italy also claim to have the saint's skull: the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence and the *Dal Pozzo* chapel in Pisa. The right hand of Saint John is preserved at Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos, and numerous smaller relics are scattered throughout the world.

COLLECTED WORKS

Widely used editions of Chrysostom's works are available in Greek, Latin, English, and French. The Greek edition is edited by Sir Henry Savile (eight volumes, Eton, 1613); the most complete Greek and Latin edition is edited by Bernard de Montfaucon (thirteen volumes, Paris, 1718–1738, republished in 1834–1840, and reprinted in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, volumes 47–64). There is an English translation in the first series of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (London and New York, 1889–1890). A selection of his writings has been published more recently in the original with facing French translation in *Sources Chrétiennes*.